Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

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Statement by the Chairman of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the progress of work in the Commission

1. The fifteenth session of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf was held at United Nations Headquarters from 4 to 22 April 2005, pursuant to the decision taken at its fourteenth session (CLCS/42, para. 53) and paragraph 29 of General Assembly resolution 59/24.

2. The following 19 members of the Commission attended the session: Hilal Mohamed Sultan Al-Azri, Alexandre Tagore Medeiros de Albuquerque, Osvaldo Pedro Astiz, Lawrence Folajimi Awosika, Harald Brekke, Galo Carrera Hurtado, Peter F. Croker, Indurlall Fagoonee, Noel Newton St. Claver Francis, Mihai Silviu German, Abu Bakar Jaafar, Mladen Juračić, Wenzheng Lu, Yong-Ahn Park, Fernando Manuel Maia Pimentel, Philip Alexander Symonds, Kensaku Tamaki, Naresh Kumar Thakur and Yao Ubuènalè Woeledji.

3. Samuel Sona Betah did not attend the session. Yuri Borisovitch Kazmin informed the secretariat of the Commission and the Chairman that he could not attend the session owing to circumstances beyond his control.

4. The Commission had before it the following documents and communications:

(a) Provisional agenda (CLCS/L.18);

(b) Statement by the Chairman of the Commission on the progress of work at its fourteenth session (CLCS/42);

(c) Submission of Brazil dated 17 May 2004 made pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and addressed through the Secretary-General to the Commission;

(d) Submission of Australia dated 15 November 2004 made pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and addressed through the Secretary-General to the Commission;

(e) Communication from the United States of America concerning the submission of Brazil;

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(f) Communications from States concerning the submission of Australia (United States of America, Russian Federation, Japan, Timor-Leste, France, Netherlands, Germany);

(g) Other communications from States (Canada, Indonesia).

5. *Opening of the fifteenth session by the Chairman of the Commission.* The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Commission, Peter F. Croker, who welcomed to the session Nicolas Michel, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, the Legal Counsel.

6. *Statement by the Legal Counsel.* In addressing the Commission, the Legal Counsel stated that the United Nations Secretariat had made substantial efforts in order to meet the growing technical needs of the Commission. Considering the nature of work involved in dealing with two or more submissions simultaneously, a number of additional facilities at the premises of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea were now in place to facilitate the work of the Commission and subcommissions. A new Geographic Information System officer had joined the Division to assist the Commission in its technical work. The Secretariat would make constant efforts to further improve the facilities.

7. The Legal Counsel acknowledged the invaluable assistance to the Division provided by the members of the Commission, Harald Brekke and Galo Carrera, in preparing a training manual for the delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles and for preparation of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, noting that in February and March 2005, the first five-day training course had been conducted in Fiji on the basis of that manual. From the positive responses received following the Fiji training course, it was evident that the manual was an important and useful tool for the developing countries in preparing their submissions by applying the criteria contained in the relevant provisions of the Convention. Based on the experience already gained, the manual would be further developed and edited, and would soon be available to all interested States.

8. The Legal Counsel informed the Commission that the second training course — for the countries of the Indian Ocean region — would be convened the following month in Sri Lanka. Further training courses were planned for the West African region in December 2005 and for the Latin American and Caribbean region in the spring of 2006.

9. The Legal Counsel congratulated the members of the Commission on the excellent professional work that they had performed with utmost integrity. He pointed out that that aspect was directly linked with the successful achievement of the tasks of the Commission, stating that how the recommendations were received by the international community depended on the image and standing of the Commission. The increase of interest of political, scientific and academic circles in the work of the Commission would be proportional to its workload. As the list of prospective submissions became bigger and members of the Commission could be invited to attend various forums, he invited the Commission to consider drafting internal guidelines for its members. Such a tool would, on the one hand, assert the impartiality of the Commission in the eyes of the international community and, on the other hand, help in guiding the members of the Commission when confronted with situations that could have political connotations and which went beyond their

technical tasks. He concluded by assuring the members of the fullest cooperation of the secretariat in fulfilling the mandate of the Commission.

10. *Adoption of the agenda.* The Chairman proposed the provisional agenda (CLCS/L.18) for consideration by the Commission, which adopted it without amendments (CLCS/43).

11. *Agenda item 3, "Organization of work".* The Chairman outlined the programme of work and the schedule for the Commission's deliberations on the various items of the agenda.

12. *Agenda item 4, "Consideration of the submission made by Brazil to the Commission pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea".* Mr. Carrera, Chairman of the Subcommission established to examine the submission by Brazil, reported on the work carried out during the intersessional period and during the first week of the fifteenth session. He informed the Commission about additional material received, through the secretariat, from the Government of Brazil during the intersessional period in October 2004 and February 2005, as well as about the consideration by the Subcommission of additional information transmitted in a letter dated 24 March 2005 from the head of the delegation of Brazil addressed to the Chairman of the Subcommission. Following a request by Mr. Albuquerque, a copy of that letter had been circulated to all members of the Commission. The Chairman emphasized the complexity of the submission and indicated that the Subcommission would continue its work during the second and third week of the fifteenth session. He noted that the Subcommission was also exploring the possibility of holding additional meetings during the intersessional period.

13. Following the report of the Subcommission, the Commission decided to seek a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel on a matter of a general nature concerning the application of the rules of procedure of the Commission and the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Specifically, the Commission decided to seek a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel on the following question:

> "Is it permissible, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the rules of procedure of the Commission, for a coastal State, which has made a submission to the Commission in accordance with article 76 of the Convention, to provide to the Commission in the course of the examination by it of the submission, additional material and information relating to the limits of its continental shelf or substantial part thereof, which constitute a significant departure from the original limits and formulae lines that were given due publicity by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in accordance with rule 50 of the rules of procedure of the Commission?"

14. During the discussion concerning the request for a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel, the Commission also considered whether the agenda of the fifteenth session should be amended in order to include a new item concerning such a request. After examining this issue, the Commission decided not to amend the agenda that had already been adopted on the first day of the session.

15. With regard to the formulation of the question to the Legal Counsel, one member of the Commission pointed out that a question of that kind should be posed with reference to specific cases, if any. The Commission, however, decided that in

order to provide guidance to the Commission, the question should be of a general nature. The Commission also decided that the request for a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel should not include technical or scientific issues.

16. In addition, one member of the Commission indicated that, even though he did not fully agree with the request for a legal opinion from the Legal Counsel and its formulation, he would not formally object to it so that the Commission could achieve consensus on this matter.

17. The Commission took note of the letter from the Deputy Representative of the United States of America dated 25 October 2004 concerning the submission by Brazil and the decision of the Commission at its last session (CLCS/42, para. 17) and its request that the Commission reconsider its conclusion with regard to its earlier letter dated 25 August 2004. The Commission recalled that the letter of 25 August had been brought to the attention of all members of the Commission and discussed at the fourteenth session, in accordance with its practice regarding communications addressed to the Commission by States. Following such consideration, the Commission had reached its conclusions, which were reflected in the statement of the Chairman. Following further discussion of this issue at the fifteenth session, it was concluded that the Commission did not consider it necessary to change its previous decision.

18. *Report of the Chairman of the Subcommission on its work during the fifteenth session of the Commission*. The Subcommission had made considerable progress in the examination of the submission of Brazil by the end of the fifteenth session. During that session, the delegation of Brazil provided additional material in response to the Subcommission's questions and requests for clarification. The delegation had also been invited to attend a meeting of the Subcommission held on 20 April 2005. During that meeting, the delegation transmitted written responses to several written questions, made a presentation relating to the matter under consideration and provided additional clarification.

19. The Subcommission agreed to meet in the week prior to the scheduled beginning of the sixteenth session, i.e. from 22 to 26 August 2005. During that week, the Subcommission would attempt to begin the preparation of its recommendations and the format of their presentation to the Commission. The Commission took note of the report and requested the secretariat to provide adequate technical support during the intersessional period and to make the necessary arrangements for the meeting of the Subcommission in New York.

20. *Agenda item 5, "Consideration of the submission made by Australia to the Commission pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea"*. The presentation of the submission of Australia was made by Christos Moraitis, head of the delegation of Australia, with additional comments made by Bill Campbell, alternate head of delegation. The delegation of Australia also included a number of scientific, technical and legal advisers. Following the presentation, the representatives of Australia responded to questions asked by the members of the Commission.

21. Regarding the issue of confidentiality of data, the representative of Australia stated that the position of Australia on that issue was in line with that of Brazil as reflected in paragraphs 12 to 14 of the statement of the Chairman of the Commission (CLCS/42). The understanding of Australia was, in summary, that the

members of the Commission would ensure the safe custody of their copies of the submission during its examination. Furthermore, access to the submission should be limited to members of the Commission and designated members of the secretariat. It was understood also that the deliberations of the Commission, the submission and any data or information relating to the submission should be treated as confidential until Australia had deposited documentation on the outer limits of the continental shelf with the Secretary-General under article 76, paragraph 9, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. On the basis of these understandings and in order to facilitate its examination by members of the Subcommission, Australia had not classified the submission formally as confidential under paragraph 2 of annex II to the rules of procedure.

22. The Chairman of the Commission, on behalf of its members, expressed appreciation to the representatives of Australia for the detailed presentation. The Commission took note of the availability of the delegation of Australia in New York throughout its fifteenth session.

23. The Commission then considered note verbale No. 89/2004 from Australia dated 15 November 2004 on the issue of Antarctica. The Commission also took note of the communications addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations received in connection with it, which supported the request of Australia, namely: (a) the note dated 3 December 2004 from the Deputy Representative of the United States of America; (b) the note verbale dated 9 December 2004 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation; (c) the note dated 19 January 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations; (d) the note verbale dated 31 March 2005 from the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations; and (e) the note verbale dated 5 April 2005 from the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations. Based on the communications, the Commission decided not to consider the part of the submission referred to as region 2 in the executive summary of the Australian submission. The Commission instructed the Subcommission accordingly.

24. The Commission took note of the contents of the note from the Permanent Mission of Timor-Leste dated 11 February 2005 and the attached position paper and decided to refer the matter to the Subcommission appointed to examine the submission of Australia.

25. The Commission took note of the note verbale dated 28 March 2005 from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, and decided to refer the matter to the Subcommission appointed to examine the submission of Australia.

26. The Commission then addressed the modalities for the consideration of the submission. The Commission decided that, as provided for in article 5 of annex II to the Convention and in rule 42 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, the submission of Australia would be addressed through the establishment of a subcommission.

27. For the purposes of establishing such a subcommission, the Commission decided to follow the procedure described in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the statement of the Chairman (CLCS/42), which took into account the provisions of the Convention and the rules of procedure of the Commission.

28. On the basis of that procedure, the following members of the Commission were elected as members of the Subcommission to consider the submission of Australia: Alexandre Tagore Medeiros de Albuquerque, Harald Brekke, Indurlall Fagoonee, Fernando Manuel Maia Pimentel, Kensaku Tamaki, Naresh Kumar Thakur and Yao Ubuènalè Woeledji.

29. The Commission requested the Subcommission to meet with a view to organizing its work, electing its officers and providing, on the basis of a preliminary examination of the submission, a time estimate for its work.

30. At a resumed plenary session of the Commission, it was announced that the Subcommission had elected Mr. Brekke as its Chairman, and Mr. Albuquerque and Mr. Tamaki as its Vice-Chairmen.

31. The Chairman of the Subcommission informed the Commission that the Subcommission had proceeded with its preliminary examination of the submission and the data accompanying it. He informed the Commission that, given the volume and nature of the data contained in the submission, the Subcommission would require additional time for the consideration of that submission and possibly intersessional meetings. He further informed the Commission that the Subcommission had decided, in accordance with section 10, paragraph 2, of annex III to the rules of procedure, to seek the assistance of another member of the Commission, Mr. Carrera.

32. *Report of the Chairman of the Subcommission on its work during the fifteenth session of the Commission.* The Subcommission completed its preliminary examination of the submission and held several meetings with the delegation of Australia, which made a detailed presentation of the data and information for each of the nine subregions included in its submission. It provided subsequent written responses to the questions of the Subcommission made in writing and clarified various technical aspects of the submission. By the end of the session, the Subcommission had made good progress in its work. To make efficient use of time, the individual members will continue to work during the intersessional period in accordance with the agreed organization of work. In the light of the substantial material submitted, however, the Subcommission will also investigate the possibility of having a working session in New York at the Geographic Information System laboratory of the Division from 27 June to 1 July 2005.

33. *Agenda items 6 and 10, "Training issues" (including the preparation of the training manual) and "Report of the Chairman of the Training Committee".* Vladimir Golitsyn, Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, informed the Commission on the progress of work on the training manual. He recalled that the training manual was based on the "Outline for a five-day training course for delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles and for preparation of a submission of a coastal State to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf" (CLCS/24 and Corr.1) prepared by the Commission in 2000. The Division has worked in collaboration with Mr. Brekke and Mr. Carrera, two members of the Commission, who have acted as coordinators developing some of its modules as well as inviting, on a widely representative basis, a number of qualified experts from both within and outside the Commission to participate in its preparation.

34. The Director stated that the preparation and use of the training manual was directly connected to the mandate of the Secretary-General to develop training courses to facilitate the preparation of submissions in accordance with the Scientific and Technical Guidelines of the Commission, as contained in General Assembly resolution 59/24 of 17 November 2004. He stated that, as originally envisaged (see CLCS/42, para. 27) the manual was completed in time for the first training course organized by the Division.

35. The Division conducted the training course in collaboration with the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Government of Fiji, and with the sponsorship of Australia and Norway, in Pacific Harbor, Fiji, from 28 February to 4 March 2005. The instructors for the training course were Karl Hinz and Iain Lamont, both former members of the Commission. They delivered training modules on technical, scientific and organizational aspects of the implementation of article 76 of the Convention. Galo Carrera and Phil Symonds, who are current members of the Commission, were also present throughout the training course as experts to answer questions in order to complement the delivery of the material and to oversee the lab exercises. The Director extended his appreciation to all current and former members of the Commission who significantly contributed to the preparation of the training material and the delivery of the training course.

36. Technical and administrative staff of six South Pacific developing States, members of SOPAC, namely Fiji, Micronesia (Federated States of), Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, as well as of four other developing States of the neighbouring South-East Asia subregion, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, participated in the training course. The participation of eight trainees from developing countries was financed by the Trust Fund for the purpose of facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for developing States, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, and compliance with article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/7. Representatives from SOPAC and the Commonwealth Secretariat attended the training course as well. Overall, the feedback from the participants indicated that the training course was successful and was found useful. At its end, the participants demonstrated a general understanding of the process and procedures involved in the delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf.

37. The Director noted that the participants had identified several needs of developing States regarding preparation of submissions. The needs were: (a) more training opportunities of a similar nature, preferably at the subregional or national level; (b) availability of free data for the completion of desktop studies; (c) additional technical expertise and scientific and technical advice; (d) surveys and collection of data; and (e) assistance with tenders and with applications for assistance from trust funds.

38. The Director informed the Commission that a second regional course was being organized for 12 developing States of the Indian Ocean region. The course would be convened in Sri Lanka, from 16 to 20 May 2005, in cooperation with the Government of Sri Lanka and relevant international organizations, such as the Commonwealth Secretariat. He stated that the third regional training course was

proposed to be held for the developing States of West Africa, in cooperation with the Government of Ghana and relevant international organizations, tentatively from 5 to 9 December 2005, and that a training course for Latin America and the Caribbean was planned for spring 2006. As in the case of the training course in Fiji, participation in the forthcoming training courses would be open to the technical staff of the developing States of the specific region.

39. The process of validation of the training manual and the training material in the upcoming training courses, as well as the developments in the practice of the Commission, may lead to adjustments in the structure and content of the manual. In that case, all participants in the past training courses would receive the final version of the manual, which will also be translated into French and Spanish.

40. The Director concluded by stating that the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea was looking forward to the continued participation of the members of the Commission as experts in the Division's training courses, consistent with the conclusions of the Commission that such participation would be in their personal capacity, with due regard to ethical considerations. It was understood that the views expressed by them would not be binding on the Commission or its subcommissions and their participation in training should not amount to providing scientific and technical advice to a particular State.

41. The Chairman of the Commission joined the Legal Counsel and the Director of the Division in thanking Mr. Brekke and Mr. Carrera, as well as other members of the Commission who had been involved in the preparation of the training manual and the development of the training material.

42. In addition to the information on the training courses, the Director of the Division, at the request of the Chairman, provided information about the current activities of the technical cooperation trust fund project, based on an agreement concluded between the United Nations and the Nippon Foundation.

43. *Report of the Chairman of the Training Committee*. The Chairman of the Training Committee, Mr. Brekke, reported on the work undertaken by the Committee at its fifteenth session. He informed the Commission that the Committee had decided that, in the light of the completion of the first edition of the training manual as well as previous input and decisions of the Commission pertaining to matters of training, the Committee would provide support to the training courses organized by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

44. In that context, the Committee reported that four members of the Commission had been invited by the Hydrographic Office, Maritime Safety Agency of Japan, to be among the lecturers at the Tokyo Training Course/Seminar on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Continental Shelf Survey held from 15 to 18 March 2005, namely Mr. Carrera, Mr. Fagoonee, Mr. Park and Mr. Tamaki. The course covered the legal, procedural and scientific aspects of the process of delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf. The course was attended by eight representatives from developing countries (Fiji, Indonesia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Tonga), the majority of whom were from small island developing States, as well as one representative of SOPAC.

45. Mr. Woeledji had attended the African Mining Partnership collaborative African shelf claim programme workshop held in Cape Town from 14 to 16 March

2005 to share the experience gained by South Africa in the surveying of its continental shelf with the relevant personnel of the Government of Senegal.

46. The Chairman of the Training Committee further proposed that he would consult with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea on the modalities of the cooperation between the Commission and the Division. The Commission took note of the report of the Chairman of the Committee.

47. *Agenda item 7, "Technical facilities and financial issues related to meetings of the subcommissions"*. The Chairman drew the attention of the Commission to paragraph 30 of resolution 59/24, which "[u]rges the Secretary-General to take all necessary actions to ensure that the Commission can fulfil the functions entrusted to it under the Convention"; and to paragraph 31, which "[r]equests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session proposals on how the requirements of the Commission could be best accommodated, taking into account the concerns expressed in the statement by the Chairman of the Commission at its fourteenth session, regarding the expectation that new submissions will require concomitant meetings of several subcommissions for their examination".

48. In this connection, the Director first briefed the Commission on issues regarding the enlargement of office space, improvement of technical facilities and new equipment in the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea currently available for meetings of subcommissions. He requested the Commission to provide specific requirements to the secretariat regarding the technical preparedness and staff resources so that these requirements could be conveyed to the respective authorities within the United Nations. The Commission decided that a letter describing the specific outstanding requirements regarding staff, facilities, software and hardware would be prepared and forwarded through the Chairman of the Commission to the Secretariat of the United Nations.

49. The Commission then further discussed the issues of workload for members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and funding for its members attending meetings of subcommissions. Many members of the Commission were of the opinion that, under current arrangements, the Commission might not be in a position to deliver on its functions. They noted that the examination of the submissions required a series of complex tasks which they had to perform not only during the sessions of the subcommissions but also during the intersessional period. For reasons of their responsibilities as Commission members with regard to the examination of the submissions, they could not delegate any tasks that required the exercise of scientific or technical judgement to the secretariat. For the same reasons and because of concerns of confidentiality, none of these tasks could be outsourced.

50. Closely linked to this problem was the duration of the examination of submissions, which extends for long periods of time both during the sessions and during the intersessional periods, thus presenting difficulties for all members of the Commission.

51. Various proposals had been made on this issue, including suggestions that the members of the Commission might need to devote full-time attention during certain periods of the year to the work they perform on the examination of the submissions. The Commission concluded that the Chairman of the Commission should bring these matters to the attention of the next meeting of States parties. In addition to sending a letter addressed to the President of the meeting, the Chairman of the

Commission should make a detailed presentation at the meeting of States parties on the workload facing the Commission in connection with the examination of the submissions, both actual and projected, including quantification of hours and resources required to complete the necessary tasks.

52. *Agenda item 8, "Report of the Chairman of the Editorial Committee"*. The Chairman of the Editorial Committee, Mr. Fagoonee, reported on the work of the Committee during the fifteenth session. He informed the Commission that the Committee had addressed the suggestion made by the Legal Counsel with regard to the drafting of internal guidelines for members of the Commission, as stated in paragraph 9 above. The Committee recommended that the Commission request the secretariat to prepare an information note on that subject for the sixteenth session of the Commission. The Commission took note of the report, approving the recommendation of the Committee, and requested the secretariat to proceed accordingly.

53. *Agenda item 9, "Report of the Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Advice Committee"*. The Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Advice Committee, Mr. Symonds, stated that a meeting of the Committee had been held on 7 April 2005 and considered a number of general issues as well as a request for technical assistance from the Government of Indonesia of 8 September 2004.

54. The request from Indonesia was for technical assistance from the Commission through the use of the trust fund established by resolution 55/7, and mentioned that further information relating to the specific requirements of such assistance would be provided in due course for the consideration of the Commission. At the time of the fifteenth session, no additional information on this request had been received.

55. During its meeting at the fifteenth session, the Scientific and Technical Advice Committee also discussed the matter of further guidance to States regarding the information that the Commission would wish to be included in requests by States for scientific and technical advice in order to assess such requests in an efficient manner and respond to them promptly. The Commission agreed that its advice function could benefit from such an approach and invited the Committee to continue to develop these requirements with a view to ultimately placing such information on the website.

56. The Chairman of the Standing Committee again reminded the members of the Commission that there were still a few short biographical notes, including a brief statement of expertise, yet to be submitted for posting on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

57. The Commission also agreed that the biographical notes containing the statements of expertise should be posted on the website of the Division by the end of the fifteenth session. In addition, the Chairman of the Committee would consult with the Division regarding the layout of the web page devoted to the Commission in order to highlight the functions of the Commission in the provision of scientific and technical advice.

58. *Agenda item 11, "Other matters" (communication from Canada)*. The Commission considered the note from the Permanent Mission of Canada dated 15 March 2005 and the attached letter addressed to the Chairman of the Commission. The letter stated that Canada envisaged presenting its submission in two parts, within the 10-year period established by the Convention, and that Canada

could decide to present first its continental shelf submission for the Atlantic Ocean, then its submission as regards other areas at a later date. The views of the Commission on this way of proceeding were sought. The Commission discussed the matter and agreed that the approach proposed by Canada was acceptable to the Commission.

59. *Briefing by the Global Resource Information Database (GRID)-Arendal.* The Chairman of the Commission had invited representatives of GRID-Arendal to make a presentation of its continental shelf facility. With the consent of the Commission, the presentation was made by Steinar Sørensen, Managing Director of GRID-Arendal, and Øivind Lønne, geoscientist. The Commission took note of the presentation.

60. *Other meetings of interest.* The members of the Commission exchanged information on other meetings of interest, such as the symposium on scientific and technical aspects of the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, to be held in Tokyo on 6 and 7 March 2006, and the thirtieth Virginia Law of the Sea Conference, entitled "Marine Scientific Research, New Technology and the Law of the Sea", to be held in Dublin from 24 to 26 May 2006.

61. *Future sessions of the Commission.* The Commission decided that two sessions would be held in 2006: the seventeenth session from 3 to 21 April and the eighteenth session from 21 August to 8 September. The Commission would advise the General Assembly, through the Secretariat, on its requirements for conference facilities for the sessions.

62. *Matters related to access to United Nations premises.* The members of the Commission pointed out that their current "consultancy" passes did not guarantee them convenient access to the main United Nations premises and that they were frequently delayed at the visitor security checkpoints while on their way to the scheduled meetings of the Commission. They requested the Secretariat to address this issue.

63. The Commission renewed its expressions of appreciation to the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as well as to the interpreters, translators and other staff, for the assistance and services provided during its current session.